



Review Article

**METABOLIC DISORDERS AND *KAPHA DOSHA* IN AYURVEDA**

**Sangeeta Gupta<sup>1</sup>, Swati Sharma<sup>2</sup>, Sarita Yadav<sup>3\*</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Professor, <sup>2</sup>Assistant Professor, Dept. of Rog Nidan Evum Vikriti Vigyan, FIMS, SGT University, Gurgaon, India.

<sup>3\*</sup>Assistant Professor, Dept. of Shalakyta Tantra, FIMS, SGT University, Gurgaon, India.

**Article info**

**Article History:**

Received: 15-05-2024

Accepted: 11-06-2024

Published: 10-07-2024

**KEYWORDS:**

*Kapha*, Metabolic Disorders, *Dosha*, *Ama*, *Agni*.

**ABSTRACT**

According to Ayurveda *Vata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha* are the three types of energy factors called *Doshas* which actually control all the functioning of the body and are thus responsible for health and disease. Various types of disorders occur in the body due to derangement of these *Doshas*. *Vata* or air factor is responsible for degenerative disorders in the body whereas inflammatory disorders occur due to the derangement of *Pitta*. *Kapha* or water factor is responsible for causing the accumulative type of diseases in the body. Most of the lifestyle disorders today like hyperglycaemia, hypercholesterolemia, hypertension, obesity or a cluster of all these in the form of metabolic syndrome are the major consequences of accumulation of certain unwanted substances in the body which increase the fluid level of the body or the imbalanced *Kapha* leading to the stagnation of the body channels with undigested material or toxins called *Ama* in Ayurveda. *Ama* is a sticky material generated due to decreased *Agni* levels or decreased enzyme secretions leading to defective or incomplete digestion of the food we take producing the byproducts of metabolism which get accumulated in the body with time producing the accumulative disorders. According to Ayurveda, *Kapha* type people are prone to such ailments. A proper understanding of the balanced and unbalanced *Kapha* in Ayurveda is helpful in providing an answer to the metabolic disorders.

**INTRODUCTION**

The incidence of lifestyle disorders like obesity, hypertension, diabetes etc. is increasing day by day. Moreover, the young generation is affected more by these due to increasing stress and lack of awareness or false awareness regarding health. Faulty diet and activity are the major cause of any kind of imbalance in the body. Whereas the modern science suggests the increase in blood cholesterol and blood sugar levels as the key factor for causing the heart disease, obesity etc. Ayurveda has a different explanation. Any kind of faulty accumulation in the body is due to decreased metabolic fire or *Agni* [1] which becomes inefficient to digest the food completely thereby generating the byproducts of metabolism. *Agni* is vitiated here due to the faulty diet habits or taking more of the *Kapha* diet.

Taking too heavy, too oily or much calorie food at improper times with more dairies in combination to a sedentary lifestyle leads to the accumulation of *Kapha*[2] in the body channels hampering the circulation and stasis or stagnation of the body channels with semi digested substances. There is pooling of microparticles in the circulation as well as tissues called *Ama* [3] in the body which is actually the imbalanced *Kapha*. It gets deposited in the body in the form of low-density lipids or bad cholesterol causing obesity, insulin resistance leading to diabetes, atherosclerosis in the vessels leading to the Hypertension and CAD (coronary artery disease).

Simple remedy is to switch off the *Kapha* diet and increase the *Agni* or metabolic fire in the body. To understand it well one must learn the character of *Kapha* and its functions in the body. Diet responsible for balanced and imbalanced *Kapha* and other remedial measures to keep it in balance is also discussed here. *Kapha* body type people are more prone to get these types of ailments. To get the knowledge about *Kapha* body type is also the aim.

Access this article online

Quick Response Code



<https://doi.org/10.47070/ijapr.v12i6.3178>

Published by Mahadev Publications (Regd.)  
publication licensed under a Creative Commons  
Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0  
International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0)

### Attributes and Importance of *Kapha Dosha*

*Kapha dosha* [4] is the water element of the body and is determined by its heavy, cold and soft nature and has all the same qualities as mucus. As it is a slimy, unctuous fluid so it represents all the body fluids which keeps the body well lubricated, helps in transportation of essential nutrients and keeps the body hydrated with balanced electrolyte levels.

*Kapha* has the attribute of stability [5] and thus represents all potential states of energy in the body. It is responsible for the stable and ideal constitution of the body and keeps the body bound with its quality of adhesiveness and helps in performing the functions well.

### Location or Site of *Kapha Dosha*

*Kapha dosha* is mainly located in upper parts of the body as in head, neck, nose, tongue, throat with Chest being its main seat [6]. It is also situated in all the joints of the body in order to provide smooth lubrication and cushion for their proper movements. *Kapha dosha* resides in stomach and in all body fluids [7]. The main bulk of whole-body fat is composed of *Kapha dosha*.

### Physiological Functions of *Kapha Dosha* in the body

*Kapha* provides *Bala* [8] and hence it strengthens the body for day-to-day activities to perform work. *Kapha* is the source of stability in the body, empowers the immunity and hence provides resistance to disease and ageing. The union and integration of all the body's major and minor parts including organ system and cellular system is being done by *Kapha*. *Soma* / water in the body is implicit in the *Kapha*.

As told in Ayurveda that *Balyawastha* is the *Kapha* dominant [9] phase of one's life as *Kapha dosha* is responsible for body weight and growth and childhood is the stage of growth and development. It plays a vital role in healing at any damage. All biological fluids, whether internal or extracellular, are composed of *Kapha* and serve essential purpose of body.

*Kapha* functions for maintaining the stability and firmness in one's body and as it is located in all joints [10] so it also helps in providing lubrication and cushion to the joints which helps in performing their normal functions. It maintains the unctuousness and hydration of the body. *Kapha Dosha* helps in keeping a tolerant and peaceful mind [11] keeps the person energetic without any anxiety and other behavioural disorders in the body.

### Body Features of *Kapha* body types

As Ayurveda talks about different body types or constitutions according to the dominance of *Doshas*, *Kapha* dominant person are known as *Kapha* body types. *Kapha* body type people [12] have a strong built, well-defined ligaments and joints with slow, steady

and heavy movements. They have good strength and stamina. They are physically and mentally more stable than other body types. They have strong, dark, thick, long hair, big, white watery eyes with pinkish conjunctiva. As, the metabolism is comparatively slow in *Kapha* body type person they have got a tendency to put on the weight easily and it is difficult for them to reduce then. They have good will power, confidence, intellect and a good memory. They have strong beliefs, are well cultured and are kind, helping, calm, grateful, thankful and respectful to all. They are generally happy person and have consistent and thoughtful speech.

### Causes of increase and vitiation of *Kapha*

Consumption of diet and lifestyle with the attributes same as of *Kapha* increase *Kapha Dosha* in the body like

- Sweet, sour and salty diet increases *Kapha Dosha* in the body. [13]
- As *Kapha Dosha* is oily, cold and heavy in character, consumption of diet having these qualities increases *Kapha Dosha* in the body. *Kapha Dosha* also possess the attribute of sweetness and unctuousness, hence consumption of sweet and sticky food also increases the *Kapha* in body. Most of the dairy products, sweets etc. come in this category. Mere consumption of these types of food in a normal amount helps in maintaining the normal state of *Kapha* whereas when all of them or some of them are consumed in excessive amount leads to the imbalance of *Dosha*.
- Day sleep causes heaviness in the body as it increases *Kapha* in the body. [14] Sedentary lifestyle, laziness, lack of physical activity, completely relaxed mind without worries and no mental activeness also leads to vitiation of *Kapha Dosha*.

### Physiological Accumulation and pacification of *Kapha Dosha*

There is physiological variation of each *Dosha* in the body, so also of *Kapha*. *Kapha* gets accumulated physiologically in cold weather inside the body channels and get vitiated in spring season due to dissolution of accumulated *Kapha* by the heat of sun rays present in spring. [15] Therefore, there are more chances of cold, cough, sinusitis and allergic bronchitis etc. in this weather. It gets pacified in summer season due to seasonal accumulation of *Vata Dosha* inside the body and due to the hot weather. *Kapha* is increased naturally at the beginning of the day that is early in the morning.

*Kapha dosha* physiologically increases immediately after the consumption of food followed by aggravation of *Pitta* and *Vata* respectively. [16] *Kapha Dosha* is physiologically increased in childhood stage of one's life as that is the period of growth and development of the body which is the major function of *Kapha*.

### Manifestation of increased *Kapha* in the body

When *Kapha Dosh*a increases in the body due to faulty diet and activity, it is manifested in the form of various signs and symptoms. There is lack of interest in eating the food or lack of appetite as there is already the presence of heaviness in the body due to increased *Kapha*. Patient always feels like sleepy; he is unable to actively participate in his day-to-day activities. Patient feels lethargic and inactive due to the heaviness<sup>[17]</sup> in the body. Patient senses cold in his body i.e., reduced body temperature due to the cold property of *Kapha* and resulting slow metabolism due to *Kapha dosha*. Patient is always tired without involving in any exhausting activities, always feels dull and drowsy.

Body of the patient presents excessive unctuousness and hardness as hydration and fluid in the body increases. Patient has presence of sliminess in the stools also due to presence of *Kapha* in it. Patient feels obstruction, oedema and itching in some parts of the body or whole. The taste of the mouth feels salty and sweet without eating any such tasting food articles. Patient also feels excessively coldness in the body even sitting at normal room temperature due to quality of *Sheeta Guna* of *Kapha*. Patient, falls sleepy and is inactive and lethargic all the time.<sup>[18]</sup>

Slowly, due to lowered metabolism the person gets obese and there is accumulation of byproducts of metabolism due to inadequate metabolic activity. Increased abdominal fat leads to insulin resistance and diabetes, excess of bad cholesterol in the blood leading to hypercholesterolaemia and atherosclerosis.<sup>[19]</sup> Atheromas in the coronary arteries further leads to hypertension and coronary artery disease which put a person at risk of heart attack and stroke.

### Remedial measures to balance the vitiated *Kapha*

In Ayurveda, food is medicine. A *Kapha*-pacifying diet is beneficial in nourishing *Kapha Dosh*a to stay balanced. Because *Kapha dosha* is cool and slow in nature, it benefits from getting fired up a little with stimulating activities and foods.

### *Kapha Dosh*a-balancing diet

Light dry diet, warm food and warm drinks instead of unctuous/oily, cold, heavy food is better for *Kapha*. Pungent, bitter, and astringent tastes<sup>[20]</sup> in the form of added spices and *Garam Masala* in food are favourable to take to kindle the *Agni* and to boost up the metabolism. Large quantities of food, especially at night need to be avoided. Sweet, sour, and salty tastes which directly increase *Kapha* must be minimized. Cold, wet foods can weigh sluggish *Kapha* down further. So, the foods that are warm, light, dry, and lightly spiced are favourable. Some of the *Kapha* food stuffs are as-

- **Grains:** Old grains (minimum one year), barley, millet, corn, buckwheat, rye, oats instead of wheat and rice are beneficial.
- **Pulses:** All pulses can be taken in limited quantity. Black gram is good to balance the excess of *Kapha*.
- **Dairy:** Buttermilk, low-fat milk and small amount of *Ghee* can be taken. One must avoid Cheese, whole milk, sweets made up of condensed milk etc.
- **Sweeteners:** Honey and old jaggery can be used as a sweetener instead of white sugar.
- **Oils:** Mustard, sunflower and olive oil can be used for cooking.
- **Nuts and Seeds:** All nuts and seeds can be taken but in little quantity so as not to increase the body fat. Nuts are good to keep the metabolism up.
- **Spices:** Added spices like black pepper, ginger powder, *Garam Masala* are beneficial to take. Low salt diet is preferable to prevent the water retention.
- **Fruits:** All fruits are beneficial except the mucus forming fruits like bananas, custard apple etc. which must not be taken frequently.
- **Vegetables:** All vegetables can be taken but properly cooked with added spices.

### *Kapha Dosh*a- balancing activity

- Vigorous regular exercise till profuse sweating is advisable to boost up the metabolism.
- One must favour warm temperatures and avoid cold damp weather.
- Early to bed, early to rise principle must be followed.
- A daily oil massage with stimulating essential oils like mustard oil is beneficial.
- Eat the proper amounts of food at each meal, avoid overeating.
- Long sitting type of sedentary work must be avoided.
- One must follow an active working schedule so as to keep the metabolism up.

### CONCLUSION

Metabolic imbalance or low metabolism is the cause of most of the metabolic disorders. Though the metabolic imbalance can be due to various causes, principal reason in Ayurveda is the lowered *Agni* due to which there is slow metabolism and there is accumulation of metabolic wastes in the body. *Kapha* dominant people naturally have slow metabolism and in others also when the *Kapha* is vitiated or out of balance leads to diminution of *Agni*. All the signs and symptoms of increased *Kapha* discussed above like lethargy, inactiveness, oedema in body parts, obesity etc. are the markers of approaching metabolic derangement due to the lowered *Agni*. If not taken care

at time may lead to true metabolic disorders. Obesity especially the increased abdominal fat leads to insulin resistance causing diabetes which further causes the derangement of fats causing hypercholesterolaemia and hypertriglyceridaemia which then trigger the atherosclerotic changes in the blood vessels which are a major risk factor for the coronary artery disease.

So, Ayurvedic concept of *Kapha* is very important to understand the pathology behind the metabolic disorders and accumulative diseases so that the effective remedial measures can be *taken* to prevent and cure these lifestyle disorders.

## REFERENCES

1. Vagbhatt, Illustrated Ashtang Hridaya text with English translation and appendices by Dr. R. Vidyanath, foreword by Prof. R.H. Singh, published by Chaukhamba Surbharati Prakashan, edition 2017, Sharira sthana 3/76.
2. Charak, Charaka Samhita, Uttaraardha by Dr. P.V. Tiwari published by Chaukhamba Vishvabharati, Varanasi, 1<sup>st</sup> edition, 2018, Chikitsa sthana 6/4.
3. Vagbhatt, Illustrated Ashtang Hridaya text with English translation and appendices by Dr. R. Vidyanath, foreword by Prof. R.H. Singh, published by Chaukhamba Surbharati Prakashan, edition 2017, Sutra sthana 13/23-24.
4. Charak, Charaka Samhita, Purvaardha by Dr. P.V. Tiwari published by Chaukhamba Vishvabharati, Varanasi, 1<sup>st</sup> edition, 2018, Sutra sthana 1/61.
5. Charak, Charaka Samhita, Purvaardha by Dr. P.V. Tiwari published by Chaukhamba Vishvabharati, Varanasi, 1<sup>st</sup> edition, 2018, Sutra sthana 18/51.
6. Charak, Charaka Samhita, Purvaardha by Dr. P.V. Tiwari published by Chaukhamba Vishvabharati, Varanasi, 1<sup>st</sup> edition, 2018, Sutra sthana 20/7.
7. Sushrut, Sushrut Samhita with English translation of text and Dalhana commentary with critical notes, edited and translated by Prof. Vasant C. Patil and Dr. Rajeshwari N.M published by Chaukhamba Publications, New Delhi, First edition, 2018, Vol 1, Sutra Sthana 21/5.
8. Charak, Charaka Samhita, Purvaardha by Dr. P.V. Tiwari published by Chaukhamba Vishvabharati, Varanasi, 1<sup>st</sup> edition, 2018, Sutra sthana 17/117.
9. Vagbhatt, Illustrated Ashtang Hridaya text with English translation and appendices by Dr. R. Vidyanath, foreword by Prof. R.H. Singh, published by Chaukhamba Surbharati Prakashan, edition 2017, Sutra sthana 1/10.
10. Sushruat, Sushrut Samhita with English translation of text and Dalhana commentary with critical notes, edited and translated by Prof. Vasant C. Patil and Dr. Rajeshwari N.M published by Chaukhamba Publications, New Delhi, First edition, 2018, Vol 1, Sutra Sthana 21/13.
11. Sharadhar, Sharangadhara Samhita of Sharangdhara acharya, Sanskrit text with English translation by Dr. G. Prabhakar Rao, published by Chaukhamba Publications, New Delhi, 1<sup>st</sup> edition 2013, Prathama Khanda, 6/22.
12. Vagbhatt, Illustrated Ashtang Hridaya text with English translation and appendices by Dr. R. Vidyanath, foreword by Prof. R.H. Singh, published by Chaukhamba Surbharati Prakashan, edition 2017, Sharira sthana 3/96-103.
13. Vagbhatt, Illustrated Ashtang Hridaya text with English translation and appendices by Dr. R. Vidyanath, foreword by Prof. R.H. Singh, published by Chaukhamba Surbharati Prakashan, edition 2017, Sutra sthana 1/15.
14. Vagbhatt, Illustrated Ashtang Hridaya text with English translation and appendices by Dr. R. Vidyanath, foreword by Prof. R.H. Singh, published by Chaukhamba Surbharati Prakashan, edition 2017, Sutra sthana 7/55.
15. Madhav, Madhva Nidanam of Shree Madhavakara, with Sudha Lahri comments, Pt Shri Umeshananda Sharma and Pt, Shri Brahma Shankara Shastri, published by Jai Krishnadas, Banaras 1/5.
16. Vagbhatt, Illustrated Ashtang Hridaya text with English translation and appendices by Dr. R. Vidyanath, foreword by Prof. R.H. Singh, published by Chaukhamba Surbharati Prakashan, edition 2017, Sutra sthana 1/7.
17. Vagbhatt, Ashtang Sangrah of Vagbhatta Sutra sthana, translated by Dr. B. Rama Rao, published by Chaukhamba Vishvabharati, Varanasi, Vol. 1, Sutra Sthana 19/6.
18. Vagbhatt, Illustrated Ashtang Hridaya text with English translation and appendices by Dr. R. Vidyanath, foreword by Prof. R.H. Singh, published by Chaukhamba Surbharati Prakashan, edition 2017, Sutra sthana 11/7-8.
19. Ramdas Nayak, Exam preparatory Manual for Undergraduates, General and Systemic Pathology, by Dr Ramdas Nayak, published by Jaypee Brothers Medical Publishers, First edition, 2015, Chapter-9, Vascular Disorders, pg no.255.
20. Vagbhatt, Illustrated Ashtang Hridaya text with English translation and appendices by Dr. R. Vidyanath, foreword by Prof. R.H. Singh, published by Chaukhamba Surbharati Prakashan, edition 2017, Sutra sthana 1/15.

### Cite this article as:

Sangeeta Gupta, Swati Sharma, Sarita Yadav. Metabolic Disorders and Kapha Dosha in Ayurveda. International Journal of Ayurveda and Pharma Research. 2024;12(6):74-77.

<https://doi.org/10.47070/ijapr.v12i6.3178>

Source of support: Nil, Conflict of interest: None Declared

### \*Address for correspondence

**Dr. Sarita Yadav**

Assistant Professor,  
Dept. of Shalakyta Tantra,  
FIMS, SGT University, Gurgaon,  
India.

Email: [dryadav98@gmail.com](mailto:dryadav98@gmail.com)

Disclaimer: IJAPR is solely owned by Mahadev Publications - dedicated to publish quality research, while every effort has been taken to verify the accuracy of the content published in our Journal. IJAPR cannot accept any responsibility or liability for the articles content which are published. The views expressed in articles by our contributing authors are not necessarily those of IJAPR editor or editorial board members.